

**SCHOOL ETHICS COMMISSION  
RESOLUTION ON INVOKING THE DOCTRINE OF NECESSITY**

**WHEREAS**, the School Ethics Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq. was enacted by the New Jersey State Legislature to ensure and preserve public confidence in school board members and school administrators and to provide specific ethical standards to guide their conduct; and

**WHEREAS**, questions have arisen regarding how a Board should invoke the Doctrine of Necessity when a quorum of a board of education has conflicts of interest on a matter required to be voted upon; and

**WHEREAS**, the School Ethics Commission has provided some guidance in Public Advisory Opinion A03-98 (April 1, 1998), but finds that there is a need to repeat and clarify its opinion; and

**WHEREAS**, the opinion set forth that, when it is necessary for a Board to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity, the Board should state publicly that it is doing so, the reason that such action is necessary and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

**WHEREAS**, the opinion further provided that if the Board must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity not just to vote, but also to form a negotiations committee because it is without even three members to serve as a committee, then the Board must determine whether to act as a committee of the whole or to choose a smaller negotiations committee from among its members after stating publicly its reason for doing so as set forth above; and

**WHEREAS**, in keeping with the Legislative purpose as set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:12-22(a), the School Ethics Commission views public disclosure of conflicts of interest to be paramount when it is necessary to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the School Ethics Commission hereby requires Boards of Education and Charter School Boards of Trustees that must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity to adopt a resolution setting forth that they are invoking the Doctrine, the reason for doing so and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Boards of Education and Charter School Boards of Trustees that invoke the Doctrine are directed to read the resolution at a regularly scheduled public meeting, post it where it posts public notices for 30 days and provide the Commission with a copy;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Commission shall distribute this Resolution to the county superintendents for distribution to the school districts and charter schools, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials and the New Jersey Education Association.

*Paul C. Garbarini*

Paul C. Garbarini, Chairperson

Dated: February 25, 2003